

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

MARTIN SHIVELY.

There was a time when men who subscribed to the teachings of the Bible, were compelled to put forth every energy of heart and mind, to prove the claims made in behalf of the book. The doctrine of its inspiration was cautiously received and often scouted, and heathen argument to overthrow its claims, was often the most cruel that human depravity could desire. Wild beasts, fire, and countless instruments of torture (Heb. 11: 37,) were matched against the devotion of the children of God. If by these, their bodies were rent out of all semblance to human form, and the lips which so earnestly advocated the truth were stilled in death, the doctrines they had taught, and for which they freely died, lived on and gained new adherents each day. While it is indeed true that atheists and agnostics are to be found, and perhaps in unfortunate numbers, the day has however passed when defense must be constantly made for these doctrines. And if at times the fight waxed hot, and love for the Book seems lukewarm in many hearts, and we almost conclude that the cause is lost, I yet believe that down deep in every soul the conviction holds that it is "The Book." Because I thus believe, I shall not argue in defense of its inspiration. It shines forth its searching and life giving light upon all men, and they are conscious of its influence; this fact is evidence enough for me.

Other evidences, internal and external, but strengthen the conclusion already arrived at. It is God's word, and God's message of love and good will to men.

If, therefore, the Bible is the word of God, its teachings are inerrant. Around this proposition, the fiercest battles have been waged. Battles between mighty men; battles in which the pen was the weapon of warfare; battles in which many souls have been wrecked, and incalculable harm done; battles from which the truth has come unscathed, and shining even more brightly, if possible, than before. The on-looker may have been doubtful of the outcome sometimes, but he ought not to have forgotten that God lives, and under his hand the right will prevail. Interpolations there have been, but if we would acquaint ourselves with them, we must procure the apocrypha to the New Testament and the Old, for they have slipped out and found their proper place. As oil and water will not mingle, even so will the divine, and purely human additions to the divine word, mingle. The divine work marches grandly on, and we have but to follow as it leads, for it is our pillar of cloud and of fire. It is urged that

men have outgrown the Book, but truth, in its application to human need and human duty, remains truth. Though we may see the Word under a more searching light than of yore, it is no less applicable to man now than when it first was given. What a comfort it is to know that one foundation has survived the test of ages, and one which shows its ability to stand, by what it has withstood. Systems of human philosophy have seemed reasonable to a few perhaps, at their announcement; later all men have accepted them, and still later it was discovered that they could not be substantiated, and all men have forsaken them. Not so with the Word, for like the Rock of Ages, it yet abides. Some portions of the Scripture may be beyond our comprehension, but when human intellect shall have developed to the point from which they can be comprehended, all will be found true and correct. Yes, the Word is inerrant. No weak or faulty philosophy is propounded by its pages, but truth, unchangeable, eternal, like him from whose soul it has proceeded.

If the Bible is the word of God, its commands are to be respected. It is not to be used as if it were the production of a finite mind. There is infinite authority, power and love behind the Book which commend it to our respect and esteem. Even if it contained no promise of future reward, only setting forth our life of duty, yet would its authority hold? But now that it seeks to govern this present life for its own good, and promises such rich return for obedience, our obligation to support and obey it, has been intensified many fold. The salvation which is desired by every heart, is assured to the obedient and to them only. Many tell us there is only use for the spirit, and if we but follow in its way we are safe. It is well; but God's spirit must and does work in conjunction with his work, and never contrary to it. The Christian (?) gentleman who said, "I don't care what the Bible says as long as I feel so good in my heart," evidently supposed that the Holy Spirit was in no sense governed by the Word, being forgetful of the fact that one of its functions is leading us to it and to obey it. (John 16: 13, 14.) It may indeed be that men may be in possession of peace, but is it the "peace which floweth like a river?" (Isa. 48: 18.) Or may it be a peace based upon ignorance? There are two foundations upon which men build; one rock, and the other sand. Upon each the builder may feel secure, and each will do so long as no trial comes; but when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, security vanishes from the one, while the other is estab-

lished. A time will come when our peace shall be put to the test; when our work will be tried, and it is far better to rest on the promises which are made for obedience. We may not see the whole divine purpose in each command, but if in the spirit of love and confidence we render obedience, blessings for the present and future will be our share. Because we cannot fully understand the import of a commandment, does not give us license to expunge it. The world has outgrown the ordinances given to the early church, for it has not attained unto the ideal manhood, as it is exemplified in Jesus Christ. Until such time as it reaches this glorious end, there is abundant reason why men should walk in the "straight and narrow way" of obedience which points unerringly toward him who was obedient in all things even unto death. (Phil. 2: 8.)

If the Bible is God's word, it must set forth his plan of salvation. There are other plans than his. Some are simple and some are intricate, but all are devoid of the authority and touch of power, which mark his way. The other plans of which I speak are the inventions of men, and like their authors, are finite and visionary. It is obvious then, that God's plan is the only one worthy of our consideration. He is omniscient, and is therefore, able to direct us knowingly, and his way will not lead us astray, for "There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," (Acts 4: 12,) than by the name of Jesus. Many splendid theories have been announced, and the more fantastical, dark and mysterious, are numbering their adherents by thousands. It matters little dear reader, how beautiful or how interesting may be the doctrine presented to you, you will be wise to ascertain if it bears the divine stamp. It must proceed from heaven to be certain and efficacious. I fear that few men realize what a mistake may mean. Men are half interested, and allow themselves to be guided by the half-living conviction, that any sort of religion will save them if they are but honest in the observance of its teachings. Many are ready to accept a substitute for truth, and some even grow enthusiastic in the defense and propagation of the substitute. But earnestness, and enthusiasm, concerning any matter, are not evidence of its soundness. It must be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." In so serious a matter as the one under discussion; one involving such momentous interests, we cannot afford to accept and be guided by even a half truth. Too much is at stake to be careless; it means life or death, weal or woe. And why should we be so ready to be guided by human